

# Congresswoman NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

Representing New York's 12th Congressional District  
Ranking Democratic Member, House Small Business Committee



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## NYC Small Businesses Need Assistance Following Blackout

Relief for New York small businesses adversely affected by the 2003 blackout was requested by Congresswoman Velázquez from the Small Business Administration (SBA) in the form of disaster loans.

"The repercussions of the 2003 power outage were felt throughout our city and state, as many small businesses are struggled to restart their operations and recover from revenue losses," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "In leaving many of New York's small companies without electricity or clean water for several days, the blackout has severely impacted their near-term profitability and jeopardized their long-term financial future."

Among those small businesses most affected by the blackout were restaurants, grocery stores, and other food service companies that rely on perishable goods and clean water. Many of these businesses were not equipped with backup generators and lost millions of dollars in spoiled food stocks. It is reported that the blackout cost area restaurants \$100 million in revenue losses and the city overall lost approximately \$750 million in revenue.

Congresswoman Velázquez is called on the president and the SBA Administrator, Hector Barreto, to provide federal disaster loans to struggling businesses in both New York City and the other areas hard hit by the 2003 blackout. SBA disaster loans play a pivotal role in preserving the financial health of our nation's local economies by permitting small businesses to access capital and stave off bankruptcy when disaster strikes.

"Small businesses are the backbone of New York's economy, making up the large majority of companies and creating three-fourths of all new jobs," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "First, small businesses were hard hit by the terrorist attacks of 9/11, then there was the SARS scare, and now the blackout – all during a time when both our city's economy – and our nation's as a whole – remain in a downturn. Small businesses are key players in our economic recovery, but we need to give them the right tools – and the SBA disaster loans would certainly be one of them."

## Velázquez Decries Section 8 Voucher Program During Rally

Congresswoman Velázquez spoke out against the cuts made to the Section 8 Voucher program by the Bush administration and Congressional Republicans during a rally in her district.

"Today, we face countless uncertainties as a nation, as New Yorkers, and as neighbors," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "Homelessness is at a 10-year high and housing costs continue to skyrocket. Now, in the midst of this housing crisis – with nearly 150,000 families on a closed waiting list for Section 8 vouchers in New York City – the president and his fellow Republicans are once again slashing funding for Section 8 vouchers."

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) recently released figures indicating that the costs of Section 8 vouchers have risen, meaning that Republican cuts to Section 8 are even more severe. It is estimated that it will potentially deny assistance to 100,000 families. This is the first time in the 30-year history of the Section 8 program that vouchers have actually failed to be renewed.

In an attempt to offset the deep cuts, Congresswoman Velázquez successfully restored funding to the Section 8 Voucher program, providing an additional \$150 million to restore nearly 22,000 vouchers through a congressional spending bill.

"Since coming to Congress more than a decade ago, I have consistently fought for the rights of low-income families," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "And I will continue to work to increase our nation's commitment to providing safe, affordable housing for every American. We are up against a strong opposition and stark economic conditions – but we are determined and we are right."



**Congresswoman Velázquez talks to residents during a Section 8 housing rally.**

President Bush has been traveling the country, touting his economic stimulus plan. I urge him to come here, to meet the families in New York, and see the economic realities of his housing policies."

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program provides vouchers that allow families the flexibility to receive government subsidized rental housing in the private market. In New York City, there are approximately 105,000 vouchers serving more than 200,000 residents.

# HUD Funding Should Not Be For Luxury Housing

Congresswoman Velázquez expressed concern to the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) about the use of disaster assistance funds for luxury housing by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC).

Shortly after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Congress allocated \$2.7 billion in funding for disaster recovery activities in New York City. The LMDC, the nonprofit corporation created to direct the redevelopment of the World Trade Center area, was charged with using these funds to assist individuals, other nonprofits, and small businesses as they struggled to recover from losses.

The LMDC began a Residential Grant Program to help families displaced by the September 11 disaster. But applicants to the program faced an array of obstacles to getting the assistance they needed. Many who applied last year are still waiting for even a response, and others have been denied assistance because they live just outside the boundaries designated by the LMDC. Even though the law approving federal funding for these activities established that individuals living within certain boundaries would be eligible for services, the LMDC limited assistance to a much more restrictive area.

Unfortunately, access to these funds will be made even more difficult since HUD and LMDC recently made an announcement that a portion of the funding will be used

for the creation of more than 300 housing units in Lower Manhattan for families earning between \$50,000 - \$85,000 annually. In the statement applauding the initiative, HUD and LMDC stated how this would “provide a place for the teachers, the firefighters, the people who make a community tick be able to live where they work.”

Yet the average New York City firefighter, teacher, or police officer earn well below this threshold. While these units are targeted to “moderate income” families, the vast majority of housing under this initiative will be targeted to residents with much higher incomes.

“Clearly this is not affordable housing for most of the city’s hardest working families, especially those living on a single income,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “While I certainly recognize that disaster assistance is not subject to low-moderate income requirements, I believe the more affluent residents should not be aided at the expense of New Yorkers who are struggling the most.”

Congresswoman Velázquez has called on HUD to address these and other issues associated with the Residential Grant Program because it is the federal agency tasked with overseeing the LMDC disaster assistance funding disbursement.

## 110 year-old LES Resident Oldest Person in New York

Esperanza Marrero of the Lower East Side was recognized by Congresswoman Velázquez for being the oldest person in the state of New York at 110 years old.

“She has lived through two World Wars, and has seen the changes in culture and life in Puerto Rico – and in New York City – over the decades,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “Born in 1893 in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, Esperanza is the proud grandmother of 15 and has dozens of great grandchildren. She credits her long life to getting a strong start growing up in Puerto Rico. Esperanza, which means “hope” in Spanish, was named appropriately as her life and her story are truly inspirational.”

Congresswoman Velázquez met with Esperanza to hear about her many experiences that span more than a century. She issued a statement in the Congressional Record, which paid tribute to Esperanza’s long and extraordinary life.

“Like her grandmother before her who lived to be 120, Esperanza continues to live a full life, playing bingo at the Lillian Wald Senior Center, shopping on 14<sup>th</sup> Street, or watching the boats on the East River,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “Esperanza is a reminder to all of us about what it means to live a truly, long and satisfy-



**Congresswoman Velázquez meets Esperanza Marrero, a resident of LES, and the oldest woman in New York State.**

ing life. She has experienced so much history and culture, and is truly a remarkable woman and an inspiration to all of us.”

## Grants Awarded to Our Community

### Department of Health and Human Services

**Chinatown Manpower Project, Inc.** -- \$253,333  
*for individual development accounts to improve resettlement services for refugees*

### Department of Education

**University Settlement Society of New York** -- \$363,280  
*for a talent search grant to identify disadvantaged youths with potential for postsecondary education*

### Institute of Museum and Library Services

**Museum of Chinese in the Americas** -- \$150,000  
*to increase the museum’s capacity to expand its collection and enhance its presentation*

### Department of Health and Human Services

**New York City Administration for Children’s Services** -- \$14,786,335  
*for the Head Start program*

### Department of Education

**New York State** -- \$597,207,574  
*to provide free appropriate public education to all children with disabilities*

### Department of Health and Human Services

**New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene** -- \$745,281  
*for grants to provide childhood immunizations and vaccines*